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NEA/PI FOR KIRBY, NEA/FO FOR MALLORY

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KMPI](#) [GM](#)  
SUBJECT: FOUNDATION REPRESENTATIVES DISCUSS MIDDLE EAST  
PROJECTS WITH NEA SENIOR ADVISOR MALLORY

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor John A. Bauman for reasons  
1.4(b)/(d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: NEA Senior Advisor Charles King Mallory and NEA/PI Political Pillar Manager Owen Kirby met with representatives from two German political foundations December 6-7. In separate meetings, representatives of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF) and Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FEF) presented their organizations' general principles, reviewed current projects in the Middle East, and discussed possible cooperation between MEPI implementers and their respective foundations. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) NEA Senior Advisor Charles King Mallory and NEA/PI Political Pillar Manager Owen Kirby met with Frank Spengler, Deputy Head of International Cooperation, Konrad Adeneauer Foundation (KAF), on December 6. The KAF is affiliated with the conservative Christian Democratic Union party. Spengler outlined the KAF's core activities as parliamentary work, political development, unions, and the media, adding that the Foundation is careful to avoid overlap or competition with other German institutions. When new funding appears, the KAF prefers to expand its global presence, opening a new office in another country rather than increasing the capacity of a pre-existing office. In the broader Middle East, the KAF focuses on Egypt, the Palestinian Authority, Israel, Turkey, Morocco, and Tunisia. Spengler added that they will at times decline to work on some issues (human rights, refugee issues) or with some organizations if such work threatens other aspects of their work within the country/region.

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KAF Projects in the Middle East  
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13. (C) Palestinian Authority: According to Spengler, the KAF focuses on contributing to reconciliation and reform, both in terms of the Palestinian-Israeli relations and within Palestinian society itself. Spengler noted that the KAF tries to advance these issues through NGOs rather than the Palestinian political scene, focusing particularly on young people and women. Party development remains at the heart of the KAF's mission; NGO support, said Spengler, is "not just for the NGO's sake" but is a means to create a reservoir of future political actors. The KAF is currently building contacts in the Palestinian political scene, but has not yet chosen specific targets for dialogue or partnership. Spengler noted that Hamas is officially a red line for the KAF, but that the Foundation does not thoroughly scour contacts' backgrounds for Hamas connections. Spengler added that the Israeli political establishment, with which the KAF enjoys close ties, has only recently recognized the importance of political party development in the PA.

¶4. (C) Jordan/Lebanon/Syria: The KAF office in Amman has become a hub for regional activities and networks, including countries where the KAF is currently not represented. The foundation is unable to operate in Lebanon due to security concerns and will not operate in Syria as this would be a "wrong signal" to the SARG. Spengler expressed skepticism about the Syrian situation noting that internal dissidents have no influence on the internal debate. As part of its regional programming, a large Syrian parliamentary delegation took part in an exchange with German CDU parliamentarians. The KAF plans no activities for the 2007 Syrian election.

¶5. (C) Iran: The KAF does not have an office in Iran due to the lack of a bilateral cultural agreement, which would include a security guarantee for staff members. The current political situation in Iran has only further contributed to the KAF's decision not to pursue opening an Iranian office. Asked for examples of other international NGOs present in Iran, Spengler cited the case of Dutch NGOs that had ceased operations after encountering problems with their local partner NGOs' financial controlling and transparency. Even KAF efforts to include Iranians based in Iran are difficult as Iranian participants of KAF events abroad face difficulties in receiving exit permits from the GOI.

¶6. (C) Egypt: The KAF anticipates facing problems with re-registering its Cairo office next year. A variety of registration models exist, ranging from technical agreements (the KAF's preferred option) to local registration. Spengler predicted that the KAF will probably opt for a technical agreement with the GOE, adding that they cannot accept a special deal with the GOE while simultaneously demanding that their partner Egyptian NGOs be transparent.

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KAF Cooperation with MEPI Implementers?  
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¶7. (C) As for potential collaboration between KAF and MEPI-sponsored program implementers like the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), Spengler emphasized working first on a cooperative basis before creating any broader strategic plans. Due to KAF's decentralized system, it is imperative that any further discussion be conducted at the grassroots level in order to "identify where we can't work together, where we can work together, and where we must work together." As for possible financial assistance from MEPI or its implementers, Spengler said that the KAF has no problem taking money from the U.S. but it must be very clear that it is on a partnership basis, not as a mechanism for funneling money. Working with the U.S. is not a question of funding but of political implications and what effect such cooperation would have on achieving the project's objective.

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FEF in the Middle East  
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¶8. (C) Mallory and Kirby met on December 7 with Andrae Graeber, Head of the Department for Middle East and North Africa, Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FEF). The FEF, which is closely associated with the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), works with host government entities on issues like media institutional reform, family/personal status law reform, truth and reconciliation processes), tripartite trade union work. Noting that its status as a nongovernmental entity makes gaining access to governmental agencies more difficult, it has succeeded in gaining a foothold by working with reform-willing ministries (e.g. Lebanese Ministries of Environment and Culture) and "sister" (i.e. social democratic) parties. It also works with reform-oriented nongovernmental organizations as a means to accomplishing its larger goal of building (preferably Social Democratic) party structures.

¶9. (C) During an in-depth exchange of information about programs and experiences in the region, Gaerber outlined in detail a variety of FEF's projects:

¶10. (C) Palestinian Authority: According to Gaerber, the FEF is the only German foundation trying to transform Fatah from a resistance movement into a bona fide political party. The current program has been in place since March 2006 at the explicit request of the German MFA following the Palestinian elections. The project seeks to strengthen (social) democratic, secular forces in the PA while weakening others. In addition to its Fatah efforts, the Foundation is also working closely with Mustafa Barghouti and his Mubathara party. The FEF works primarily with Fatah on a top-down basis, via a variety of access points including the Presidential Office, the head of International Cooperation, and a number of younger Fatah leaders. Noting that the National Democratic Institute (NDI) also works with Fatah, albeit on a grassroots level, Gaerber added that more intensive communication between NDI and FEF was necessary, as the Palestinians could otherwise take advantage of this lack of communication.

¶11. (C) Lebanon: FEF's work, noted Gaerber, is based on an assumption that Shi'ites are underrepresented and underprivileged. The FEF works on topics included decentralization; civil society, particularly women and youth groups; contributing to the National Dialogue, including Hizbollah and their research centers; electoral reform; parliamentary system reform, including the creation of the second parliamentary chamber and improvement in a confession-based distribution of seats; economic reform, particularly boosting Shi'ites; and reform of the security system (particularly its confessional fractionalization).

¶12. (C) Syria: Gaerber noted that the FEF had been considered an "organization non grata" until 2005, when the Syrian Prime Minister offered to allow FEF to return to Syria, a gesture apparently engineered as a means to reopen relations with Europe after the Syria's EUROMED Association Agreement was stalled. In addition to government, business and civil society figures, the FEF has maintained some contact with the Ba'th Regional Command, in part because the Ba'th Party has requested contacts with the German SPD. The FEF is only willing to cooperate on a working level, but not with Syrian leadership.

¶13. (C) Jordan: Gaerber expressed frustration at the lack of progress in democracy programming in Jordan, but cautioned against pushing the Jordanians too hard. "Despite our disappointments and that they are not fulfilling our expectations, they are the only friend we have left." Gaerber added that the FEF is critical of the work of its local office there: too much focus on the GOJ's National Agenda reform initiative and on the same "usual suspects" as contacts. In addition, Jordan-specific efforts have suffered as the Amman FEF office has been focused on work in Iraq. The FEF needs to revisit the landscape, find new actors, said Gaerber. On a regional level, Gaerber added that it has been extremely difficult to expand cooperation in Jordan on Israel/PA issues.

¶14. (U) This message was cleared by Mallory and Kirby.

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